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This seems to have been the purpose in Masfield's mind, a purpose that has been for the most part successfully achieved, for the average reader is not seriously annoyed by his own ignorance. Any slight annoyance is superseded by the pleasure that comes from a recognition of a skillful choice of words for their connotative values. The extent to which a poet can adapt his vocabulary to the attainment of such an end is one measure of his greatness.

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KING LEAR AND PELLEAS AND ETTARRE

Professor A. C. Bradley, in a well-known passage, has called attention to Shakspeare's continual reference to the lower animals in *King Lear*. Not only are the various lower animals constantly referred to throughout the play, but—what is more important—they are also frequently mentioned in direct comparison with mankind. Goneril, Regan, Oswald, and others are compared to rats, serpents, wolves, foxes, tigers, dogs, and the like with such frequency as to suggest that Shakspeare wished to stress the intimate relation between man and the lower animals and perhaps to suggest that man is, after all, but a higher beast. Indeed, the suggestion is actually made by more than one character in the play.¹ Such a conception is likewise in complete accord with the "elemental" atmosphere of *King Lear*, especially as this appears in the storm scenes.²

A noticeable parallel to this relation between man and the lower world can be found in Tennyson's *Pelleas and Ettarre*. Pelleas, becoming impatient for news from Gawain, who had promised to win for him the love of his lady, Ettarre, pushes his way through

¹ Cf. *Gloucester*. I' the last night's storm I such a fellow saw,

(Which made me think a man a worm. (IV, i, 32-3.)

For other examples see II, iii, 6-9; IV, 205-7, 264; III, vii, 99-101; IV, ii, 49; V, iii, 307.

² "As those incessant references to wolf and tiger made us see humanity 'reeling back into the beast' and ravening against itself, so in the storm we seem to see Nature herself convulsed by the same horrible passions." Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 270. See also pages 266-70.

the moonlit garden until he finds Gawain and Ettarre sleeping side by side in the third pavilion.

Back as a hand that pushes thro' the leaf
To find a nest and feels a snake, he drew;
Back as a coward slinks from what he fears
To cope with, or a traitor proven, or hound
Beaten, did Pelleas in an utter shame
Creep.

Overcoming his desire to slay them both, he lays the naked sword of the tourney athwart their naked throats.

And forth he past, and mounting on his horse
Stared at her towers that, larger than themselves
In their own darkness, throng'd into the moon;
Then crushed the saddle with his thighs, and clench'd
His hands, and madden'd with himself and moan'd:
 'Would they have risen against me in their blood
At the last day? I might have answered them
Even before high God. O towers so strong,
Huge, solid, would that even while I gaze
The crack of earthquake shivering to your base
Split you, and Hell burst up your harlot roofs
Bellowing, and charr'd you thro' and thro' within,
Black as the harlot's heart—hollow as a skull!
Let the fierce east scream thro' your eyelet-holes,
And whirl the dust of harlots round and round
In dung and nettles! hiss, snake,—I saw him there—
Let the fox bark, let the wolf yell. Who yells
Here in the still, sweet summer night, but I—
I, the poor Pelleas whom she call'd her fool?
Fool, beast—he, she, or I? myself most fool;
Beast too, as lacking human wit—disgraced,
Dishonour'd all for trial of true love—
Love?—we be all alike: only the King
Hath made us fools and liars. O noble vows!
O great and sane and simple race of brutes
That own no lust because they have no law!
For why should I have loved her to my shame?
I loathe her, as I loved her to my shame.
I never loved her, I but lusted for her—
Away—^a

^a Neither references to the lower animals nor comparisons of men to them are limited to the passages just quoted; see, for example, Pelleas's reference to Arthur's hall at Camelot,

Black nest of rats, he groan'd, ye build too high.

See also lines 177, 186, 189, 255, 276, 283, 595.

Even the casual reader is struck by the elemental nature of the quotations, by the references to the lower animals, and especially by the poet's use of such strong words as *hell*, *harlot*, *dung*, *skull*, *fool*, *lust*, *liars*, and *brutes*. In the few lines quoted, mankind is compared to snakes, hounds, foxes, rats, and wolves in particular, and to beasts and brutes in general.⁴

Nor is it more difficult to show that Tennyson has in mind here, as elsewhere in his poetry, the essential unity of man and beast, the elemental, universal nature of the animal world. In the passage that has been quoted, Pelleas definitely links himself with beasts.

This identity of man and beast in the idyll is also suggested by the references to the animal passions of man as contained in such words as *harlot* and *lust*. In Tennyson's view, nothing so tended to lower mankind to the level of the beast as impure passion; nearly every man or woman of impure life in the *Idylls* is compared by either metaphor or simile, usually both, to one or more of the lower animals. In this stress upon the harlot-idea, Tennyson again parallels the tone of *King Lear*. Almost as noticeable as the frequent mention of the lower animals in the play is the reference to the subject of illicit love and the use of such words as *lust*, *bastard*, *courtesan*, *wantons*, and *bawd*.⁵

The deeper, elemental atmosphere in *Pelleas and Ettarre* is supplied by the references to the judgment day, hell, the darkness, the moon, and the earthquake, and perhaps by Pelleas's assumption of identity with such "unearthly" elements as wrath, shame, hate, evil fame, and the wind:

I am wrath and shame and hate and evil fame,
And like a poisonous wind I pass to blast
And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the Queen.

It will be noticed that the poem thus reproduces in each of the four particulars—the repeated mention of the lower animals, the comparison between man and animals, the identity of man with beasts, and the elemental atmosphere—the characteristics of the

⁴ An examination of the fourth Book of Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* shows that the references to the lower animals originated with Tennyson.

⁵ I forebear to give the entire list; those which I have given are among the milder terms. See i, i, 7 ff.; ii, 1 ff.; 121-5; v, 47-8; iv, ii, 19 ff.; vi, 110 ff., 158-161, 261 ff.; v, i, 19, 55-65; iii, 71 ff., 171-4.

play which were described at the beginning of the article. Furthermore, in its stress upon illicit love, the poem again repeats a marked characteristic of the play. Whether or not Tennyson was consciously working under the influence of *King Lear* when he wrote *Pelleas and Ettarre* and was thus endeavoring to reproduce in his poem the "elemental" effect which Shakspeare achieved, is impossible to determine. There are, however, certain supporting facts which, taken in connection with the resemblances already noted between the play and the poem, would seem to indicate that Tennyson's poem was written under a definite (though perhaps unconscious) influence from the play.⁶

In the first place, it is noteworthy that the poem and the play parallel each other so closely. Professor Bradley, trying to prove that *Timon of Athens* was written immediately after *King Lear*, bases his argument on the essential similarity of the two plays.⁷ The poem of *Pelleas and Ettarre* is so closely parallel to *King Lear* that it could be substituted for *Timon* in the comparison which Professor Bradley draws, without altering the truth of the passage. Thus, both the play and the poem deal with the tragic effects of ingratitude. In both the victim is exceptionally unsuspicious, soft-hearted, and vehement. In both he is completely overwhelmed, passing through fury to madness in each case. Famous passages in the play and in the poem are curses; and in each occur repeated comparisons between man and the beasts.

There is a further point of similarity between the play and the poem in that the atmosphere of each is almost unique in its author's works. There are no stronger scenes in Shakspeare than the storm scenes in *Lear*; and there are no stronger scenes in the *Idylls* than the curse of Pelleas. There may be some which touch us more deeply, the death of Balin and Balan, for example; or scenes which are more intensely dramatic, such as the death of Tristram; but there is no single scene in which the language is so strong, so unrestrained and fierce. Brewed of such ingredients as *hell, harlot, earthquake, dung, skull, snake, wolf, fool, beast, liar, and lust*, it could not be otherwise. I doubt whether there is in the whole

⁶ For a suggestion as to the wording of this sentence, as well as for other helpful suggestions, I am indebted to Professor Carleton Brown of Bryn Mawr College.

⁷ Bradley, *Shakesperean Tragedy*, p. 246.

of Tennyson a passage in which the vocabulary is more raw or more ugly.

That Tennyson was familiar with *King Lear* needs no proof. It is, however, interesting to notice that in his remarks upon Shakspeare in the *Memoir*, *King Lear* is the only play that is mentioned more than once; this fact and the nature of his remarks about the play would show that he was at least well acquainted with it.

He would say, "There are three repartees in Shakespeare which always bring tears to my eyes from their simplicity. One is in *King Lear* when Lear says to Cordelia, 'So young and so untender,' and Cordelia lovingly answers, 'So young, my lord, and true.'"

"*King Lear* cannot possibly be acted, it is too titanic. At the beginning of the play Lear, in his old age, has grown half mad, choleric and despotic, and therefore cannot brook Cordelia's silence. This play shows a state of society where men's passions are savage and uncurbed. No play like this anywhere—not even the *Agamemnon*—is so terrifically human."⁸

The last quotation shows that, whether he consciously reproduced it in *Pelleas and Ettarre* or not, Tennyson was at least aware of the elemental atmosphere of *King Lear* and of its portrayal of the beast in man.

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AN OLD AMERICAN COLLEGE PLAY

One of the rarest of early American plays is *The Mercenary Match*, written by Barnabas Bidwell.¹ Indeed Seilhamer, in his *History of the American Theatre*, 1889, referred to it as a lost drama; but now three copies are known to be in existence—one at Harvard, one in the Connecticut Historical Society Library at Hartford, and one in the Library of Congress. Because of its

⁸ *Memoir*, II, pages 290, 292.

¹ "The Mercenary Match, A Tragedy. By Barna. Bidwell. New-Haven: Printed by Meigs, Bowen & Dana, in Chapel-Street." The date, which does not appear on the title-page, is given as 1784 by Evans, and as 1785 by Wegelin.